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‘Taking Arms against a Sea of Troubles’: Intertextual Reverberations of Shakespeare in Translations of *Ulysses*

Abstract: The article explores challenges posed by intertextuality in translating James Joyce’s *Ulysses*. It focuses on references to Shakespeare to highlight the complexity of woes faced not only by the translators of Shakespeare but also by translators of Joyce who face Shakespearean intertextuality in *Ulysses*. The author selects three examples of Joyce’s Shakespearean borrowings from *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and *Henry IV* in French, Italian, and Polish translations of *Ulysses*, with a passing comment on an example from the Spanish *Ulises*, to show a wide range of solutions in target languages. The article concludes by suggesting that translators of Joyce must address intertextuality in *Ulysses* in order to fully capture the nuances of Joyce’s writing.

Keywords: intertextuality, translatorial choices, James Joyce, *Ulysses*, Shakespearean allusions

Abstrakt: Artykuł rozważa zagadnienia intertekstualności w tłumaczeniu *Ulissesa* Jamesa Joyce’a. Koncentruje się na Joyce’owskich odniesieniach do Szekspira i podkreśla złożoność problematyki, z jaką borykają się nie tylko tłumacze Szekspira, ale także tłumacze Joyce’a mierzący się z szekspirowską intertekstualnością. Autorka wybrała trzy przykłady szekspirowskich zapożyczeń Joyce’a z *Hamleta*, *Otella* i *Henryka IV* we francuskich, włoskich i polskich tłumaczeniach *Ulissesa*, z przelotnym komentarzem do przykładu z hiszpańskiego *Ulissesa*, celem ukazania szerokiego zakresu rozwiązań w językach docelowych. Artykuł kończy się sugestią, że tłumacze Joyce’a muszą uwzględniać i zajmować się intertekstualnością w *Ulissesie*, aby w pełni uchwycić i oddać niuanse pisarstwa Joyce’a.

Słowa kluczowe: intertekstualność, wybory tłumaczeniowe, James Joyce, *Ulisses*, aluzje szekspirowskie

In *Ulysses*, “roguewords” and “tough nuggets” (*U* 3.389) are notoriously challenging to readers and even more so to translators. Stephen Dedalus’s recollection of J. M. Synge’s intense Parisian perorations as wars “in words of words for words, palabras” (*U* 9.577) is also an apt description of translation. It is well known that, early on, Joyce – like Stephen, a “word-catcher”, as C. P. Curran

called him (1968, 110) – fought to keep words *as he wrote them* and, lest "the moral history" of his country be effaced, preventing the Dublin dwellers from seeing their reflection in his "nicely polished looking glass," he dared not to alter the "presentment" of reality around him (*L* I, 62; 64). And yet the process of translation, in its requisite *ruthlessness*, takes the very soul out of Joyce's presentment and flings it into altered words that do not always readily fit that soul, thus ghosting the original. For example, there are complex challenges in translating such "roguewords" as *saunter*, *reproductitive* or *deliverly*, or such "tough nuggets" as *ye gods and little fishes*, a mild oath of contempt but also a title of a book that, as of the time of writing this piece, is absent from any published annotations.[1] Challenges of different sorts have to do with intertextuality and in this paper I will continue with the kind of study I contributed to a collective essay, "Spectral Shakespeare in *Ulysses* Translation" (McCourt 2016), that addressed the question of "how intertextual reverberations show up in translation, in cultures that may well lack extensive familiarity with Shakespeare's work and where far fewer, if any, quotations have become household words" and "how much Shakespeare, recognizable or not, is woven into the texture of translations" of *Ulysses* (Senn, Wawrzycka, Kovács 2016, 131).[2] This is potentially a bottomless subject, given that Joyce quoted and/or made allusions to nearly all of Shakespeare's plays and to most of his sonnets (Pugliatti 2016, 15–16). Below I present just three examples, very different in nature, of how Joyce's Shakespearean borrowings have been rendered by the translators of the French *Ulysse* (Morel et al 1929; Aubert et al 2004), the Italian *Ulisse* (De Angelis 1988/2000; Terrinoni 2022); and the Polish *Ulisses* (Słomczyński 1969; Świerkocki 2021), adding a passing comment on an example from the Spanish *Ulises* (Salas Subirat 1995). The examples selected for discussion dictate a wide range of solutions in target languages and highlight the complexity of woes faced not only by the translators of Shakespeare but also by translators of Joyce who face Shakespearean intertextuality in *Ulysses*.

"a sea of troubles"

At the opening of "Scylla and Charybdis" episode of *Ulysses*, Mr Lyster purrs a line from *Hamlet* that is of special interest to me:

> A hesitating soul taking arms against *a sea of troubles*, torn by conflicting doubts, as one sees in real life (*U* 9.3–4; emphasis added)

We remember the wider context of the famous soliloquy where Hamlet ponders not only whether "To be or not to be," but also whether it is "nobler in the

[1] As a phrase, "ye gods and little fishes," is glossed in both *Oxford English Dictionary* and Partridge's *Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*. *OED* lists sources of the saying but does not list the book *Ye Gods and Little Fishes* (James A. Henshall 1900). Some lexical and stylistic features of the book allow for a speculation that Joyce might have seen it as he worked on *Ulysses*. Available at: https://archive.org/details/yegodslittlefish00hensrich/mode/1up.

[2] The Joyce/Shakespeare nexus is a topic of important publications occasioned by the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death. See Pelaschiar 2015 and McCourt 2016.

mind to suffer or to take arms against *a sea of troubles*" (*Hamlet* III. i. 57–60). Shakespeare's plays outside of English language are many and varied, so the question presents itself: would the readers of translated *Ulysses* be able to spot this and other Shakespearian quotations or allusions that to a native English reader might be clearly recognizable? And if not, does it matter?[3]

In the two French texts of Shakespeare that I was able to locate, François Guizot (1864) and François-Victor Hugo (1865) take a slightly different approach to the English line in question:

> Qu'y a-t-il de plus noble pour l'âme? Supporter les coups de fronde et le flèches de la fortune outrageuse ? ou s'armer en guerre contre océan de misères… ? (Guizot, n.p.)

> Y a-t-il de plus de noblesse d'âme à subir la fronde et les flèches de la fortune outrageante, ou bien à s'armer contre un mer de douleurs… ? (Hugo, 274)

Guizot's "un océan de misères" and Hugo's "une mer de douleurs" share the semantic range that is understood in the manner intended by Shakespeare, though one could split hairs over the subtle differences between "misères" and "douleurs," or "s'armer en guerre contre" vs. "s'armer contre." But these translations did not travel into the French *Ulysse*:

> Un âme indécise | qui pourtant affronte | un océan d'épreuves (Morel, 208) [an indecisive soul | who nevertheless faces | a sea of trials]

> Un âme hésitante | prenant les armes contre | un océan d'épreuves (Aubert, 269) [a hesitating man | taking up arms against | a sea of trials]

There are no echoes of either Guizot or Hugo, though, of course, other versions of Shakespeare may have been consulted by the translators of *Ulysse*. To signal that the line is a quote from *Hamlet*, Morel inserted a footnote in the typescript to "un océan d'épreuves," but without acknowledging the source of this information. The phrase bears no mark of correction/revision by either Morel, Larbaud or Gilbert and it is not annotated in the 1929 Pléiade edition, nor in the 2004 Gallimard translation. Without locating the phrase in the published translations of *Hamlet*, it is difficult to assert intertextuality, especially since the translators' phrasing may come from a direct reference to *Hamlet* as they found it in Joyce.[4]

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[3] While some early translators of *Ulysses* might have missed less obvious references to Shakespeare, thus potentially affecting readers' appreciation of the complexity of *Ulysses* in target languages, the second and third wave translators, armed with decades of Joycean scholarship and annotations, have had an easier time signaling intertextuality. Many have done so by reproducing annotations from the English language sources and by consulting Shakespeare in their languages. The existence of multiple translations of Shakespeare in various languages makes it interesting to study how, if at all, they made it into translations of Joyce's *Ulysses*, but it also complicates the matter precisely because of competing versions of Shakespeare's texts.

[4] Joyce, James. undated. 'Charybde & Scylla'. Typescript. Translated by Auguste Morel, Valery Larbaud, and Stuart Gilbert. Mb, *Ulysse*. [Traduit de l'anglais par Auguste Morel, assisté par Stuart Gilbert. Traduction entièrement revue par Valery Larbaud...]. James Joyce Collection of Papers, Berg Collection, New York Public Library, p. [314]. I'm grateful to Flavie Epié for help with my query and for permission to share the content of her email.

Among the many Polish translations of *Hamlet*, there are two that approach Hamlet's phrase in a similar manner: "czy się uzbroić przeciw morzu nędzy" (Kasprowicz 1890, 81) [whether to arm against a sea of misery], and "czy też stawiwszy czoło morzu nędzy" (Paszkowski 1895, 156) [whether to head off a sea of misery]:

Być albo nie być! Oto jest pytanie!
I cóż jest większą szlachetnością serca,
Znosić pociski szalejących losów,
Czy się uzbroić przeciw morzu nędzy
I tak przez opór z niego wybrnąć? Umrzeć
(Jan Kasprowicz, 1890, 81)

Być albo nie być, to wielkie pytanie.
Jest li w istocie szlachetniejszą rzeczą
Znosić pociski zawistnego losu,
Czy też stawiwszy czoło morzu nędzy,
Przez opór wybrnąć z niego? – Umrzeć – zasnąć –
(Józef Paszkowski, 1895, 156)

Here is how the Quaker librarian's phrase appears in the two Polish texts of *Ulisses*, Maciej Słomczyński's (1969) and Maciej Świerkocki's (2021):

Dusza pełna wahań | występująca do boju | przeciw morzu trosk (Słomczyński, 141)
[soul full of doubts | stepping out to fight | against a sea of troubles]

Człowiek niezdecydowany | stawia czoło | morzu nędzy (Świerkocki, 191)
[undecisive man | heading off | a sea of misery/dearth]

It appears that Słomczyński might have relied (with slight variations) on Kasprowicz's wording by retaining "przeciw morzu" (+ "nędzy" substituted by "trosk"), while Świerkocki's "stawia czoło morzu nędzy" echoes Paszkowski's translation.[5] Słomczyński's variation on "uzbroić" / "take arms" features the word "**występująca** do boju" [**stepping out** to fight], a phonetically busy word whose five syllables do not easily glide off the tongue, in contrast to Świerkocki's "stawia czoło" that is cleaner and approximates the rhythm of "taking arms." But Słomczyński's "trosk" is semantically closer to Shakespeare's "troubles" than Kasprowicz's / Paszkowski's / Świerkocki's "nędzy." In my own translation, I proceeded with a straightforward calque, "podjąć broń przeciw morzu utrapień" [take up arms against a sea of troubles]. Serendipity on my side, I discovered that in a translation by Władysław Matlakowski (1894), the phrase in question reads: "czy też ująć za broń przeciw morzu utrapień" [or else take up arms against a sea of troubles] and I amended my version to reflect Matlakowski's.[6]

[5] Świerkocki's *Ulisses* is accompanied by a formidable companion volume, *Łódź Ulissesa*. There is no index, however, so it is difficult to locate specific references efficiently. Because of time constraints while writing this piece, I have not yet been able to study this volume to confirm whose Shakespeare translations Świerkocki consulted as he worked, but in this instance, I would venture that it is Paszkowski's.

[6] Admittedly, Matlakowski's translation is hardly known. Paszkowski's, Ulrich's, Barańczak's and Słomczyński's are the most recognisable ones and most frequently used in theatre.

Below are snippets from all 19th century Polish translators of *Hamlet*, and one from Słomczyński himself:

Być, albo nie być, oto zagadka: –
Czyli szlachetniej znieść do ostatka
Doli zawziętéj razy i groty;
Czyli przeciwko morzu cierpienia
Broń pochwyciwszy skończyć kłopoty?
Umrzéć, – zasypiać, – potém nic więcéj;
(Ignacy Hołowiński 1839, 88)

Być, albo nie być, o to jest pytanie. –
Czyli szlachetniéj dla umysłu cierpiéć
Zawistnych losów sidła i pociski:
Czy broń pochwycić na ten przestwór nieszczęść,
I wręcz go zwalczyć? – Umrzéć, – spać, nic więcej
(Jan Komierowski 1857, 85)

Być, albo nie być; oto jest zadanie: –
Co z dwojga jest wznioślejszém, czy wytrzymać
Zawistnych losów ciosy i zniewagi;
Czy przeciw morzu cierpień się uzbroić,
I siłą je pokonać? – Umrzeć, – zasnąć, –
(Krystyn Ostrowski 1870, 71–72)

Być albo nie być, oto jest pytanie.
Czy dla umysłu szlachetniej jest cierpieć
Ciosy i strzały zawistnej fortuny,
Niż broń uchwycić przeciw cierpień morzu,
Skończyć je walką? Umrzeć – spać – nic więcej!
(Leon Ulrich 1895, 64)

Być, albo nie być, – oto jest pytanie: –
czy szlachetniej jest cierpieć w duchu
proce i strzały zaciekłego losu,
czy też ująć za broń przeciw morzu utrapień
i skończyć je, opierając się im? Umrzeć, – zasnąć,
(Władysław Matlakowski 1894, 135)

Być albo nie być, to wielkie pytanie.
Jest li w istocie szlachetniejszą rzeczą
Znosić pociski zawistnego losu,
Czy też stawiwszy czoło morzu nędzy,
Przez opór wybrnąć z niego? – Umrzeć – zasnąć
(Józef Paszkowski 1895, 156)

Być albo nie być; oto jest pytanie:
Czy szlachetniejszym jest znosić świadomie
Losu wściekłego pociski i strzały,

Czy za broń porwać przeciw morzu zgryzot,
Aby odporne znikły? – Umrzeć, usnąć,
(Maciej Słomczyński 1978, 211)[7]

All examples here show a great lexical latitude afforded to translators by the semantic plasticity of the Polish language; as was the case with the French "misères" and "douleurs," Shakespeare's "troubles" can be successfully rendered by nouns (in gen. pl.) that range from "cierpień" [suffering] in Hołowiński, Ostrowski and Ulrich "nieszczęść" [calamities] in Komierowski, "utrapień" [troubles] in Matlakowski, and "zgryzot," another word for "troubles" that Słomczyński chose for his own translation of *Hamlet*. I would add a side note that Słomczyński's onomatopoeic "zgryzot" (deriving from Polish for "teeth gnashing", as one would in the face of travails), is, like his word "występująca" above, quite noisy phonetically and stands in contrast to the original's "troubles" – which is why I favor "utrapień" as a felicitous, quasi-chiasmic echo of "troubles" (utrap-/troub-).

"catastrophe"

Another Shakespearian phrase in *Ulysses*, Simon Dedalus's "I'll tickle his catastrophe" (6.67), is worth studying because translators of both Joyce and Shakespeare have approached it in very different ways. The phrase comes from *Henry IV, Part 2*: "I'll tickle your catastrophe" (II, i), Joyce having changed the pronoun. Below are three Polish translations of that phrase:

Falstaff. Precz mi stąd, ty pomywaczko! Ty żebraczko! Ty tłuku! **Albo połechcę cię katastrofą.**
[or I will tickle you *with* catastrophe]
(Ulrich 1875, 157)

Folstaf. Precz, ty pomyjaczko, ty plucho, ty śmierdziucho! **Bo ci połechcę katastrofę.**
[or I will tickle *your* catastrophe]
(Koźmian 1877, 170)

Giermek. Pójdźcie precz chłopi, brutale wołopasy! **Ja was tu tak ochłoszczę rózgami, że zobaczycie!**
[I will so flog you with birch twigs, you will see!]
(Jankowski 1895, 289)[8]

Taking cue from "catastrophe" as a literary device that names a "disastrous end," Shakespeare built on this meaning and used "catastrophe" to refer to a person's posterior.[9] Indeed, the Italian translation by Goffredo Raponi (1998) that reads: "Ti solletico io la tua catastrofe!" (243), glosses "catastrofe" as "il dereta-

[7] Słomczyński's translation of *Ulysses* precedes his translation of *Hamlet* by nearly a decade.

[8] In Shakespeare, it is the Page/Giermek, not Falstaff, who directs invectives and a threat at the Hostess. Both Ulrich and Koźmian place them in the mouth of Falstaff. In another twist, Jankowski's translation has the Page load insults not on the Hostess, but on the men she calls on for help.

[9] Merriam-Webster, https://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/shakespeare-insults (accessed 17 June 2022). See also Gifford/Seidman, 106.

no," or backside/posterior. The word is also preserved in François-Victor Hugo's French translation (1865): "Je vais chatouiller la catastrophe!" (349).

So how does the "tickling" of one's "catastrophe" fare in the Polish, Italian and French translations of *Ulysses*? Both Polish translators opted for rendering Simon Dedalus's expletive as a variant on corporal punishment, foregoing the word "catastrophe," though, arguably, Ulrich's or Koźmian's Polish Shakespeare would have given them the license to do so:

Słomczyński: "Przetrzepię mu tyłek" (68)
[I'll slap his butt/backside]
Świerkocki: "Już ja go połechcę w zadek" (95)
[I will surely tickle his behind]

I have not yet decided how to render this phrase in my own translation but surveying solutions in other languages proves instructive. As is the case with the Polish *Ulisses*, the word "catastrophe" is absent from the French *Ulysse* as well:

Morel: "Il y aura de la case et il me devra ça" (89)
Aubert: "Il va prendre une sacrée culottée" (132)[10]

By contrast, the Italian texts I work with both use the word:

De Angelis: "Gli titillerò la catastrofe" (89)
Terrinoni: "Gli stuzzico la catastrofe" (171)

Melchiori's and De Angelis's *Ulisse: Guida alla lettura* (1984/2000) does not identify "catastrofe" as Shakespearian, but Terrinoni's newest, magisterial edition of *Ulisse* (2022) takes advantage of Gifford/Seidman *Annotations* and transfers the reference for the benefit of his readers.

"Married"

Allusions to the phrase from *Othello*, "The beast that has two backs at midnight. Married" (*U* 15.3631), appear twice earlier in *Ulysses* (7.752 and 9.469). Joyce's wording here departs from Shakespeare's (which reads: "making a beast with two backs"), and Stephen's word "married" abbreviates the actual question ("Are they married…? *Othello*, I, i). These phrases travel into the Polish Shakespeare straightforwardly as "zwierzę o dwóch grzbietach" [a beast with two backs] and

[10] Once again, I'm grateful to Flavie Epié for checking the 1929 typescript and reporting that there are no notes on the word. Morel, she writes, "seems to tone it down a bit and focus on solely violence," while Patrick Drevet (2004; the translator of "Hades" and "Nausicaa") plays on the word "culottée" to translate the beating (as Morel did with "il y aura de la case") – the word is "a tongue-in-cheek allusion to underwear or lack thereof (*une personne culottée* = cheeky, sassy, bold; *prendre/infliger une déculottée* = give/take a thrashing ; and of course *culottes* = pants, underwear > *déculotter* = taking down one's pants / *culotter* = (used for kids) to put one's pants on; one reads *cul* (arse) in *culottée*). That way, the 2004 translation manages to convey both meanings of the Shakespearean "catastrophe / disastrous end," even though it does not directly quote from the published French translations of Shakespeare's play" (private correspondence).

"czy sądzisz, że już ślub wzięli?" [do you think they are married?)] (Ulrich 1875, 10–11).[11]

Now, in the Polish *Ulisses*, we have the following:

Słomczyński: Zwierzę | które ma dwa grzbiety | o północy. | Poślubiona. (399)
[animal | that has two backs |at midnight. | {she's been} wedded]
Świerkocki: Zwierzę | które o północy | ma dwa grzbiety. |Wyszła za mąż. (552)
[animal | that at midnight | has two backs. | She got married]

By itself, Joyce's "Married" may or may not resonate for the English readers as a reference to *Othello*, though the context should help. And while there are no obstacles to rendering in Polish the first phrase, "Married" does present a problem to translators into languages such as Polish, because, without the context of Shakespeare's play, it is impossible to know whether "Married" is masculine, feminine, singular, or plural. In Słomczyński, "Married" travels into Polish as "Poślubiona," a word that can only refer to a married woman. Though the wording for "married" is slightly different in Świerkocki, its gender marker is also feminine.

Facing a dilemma how to approach this in my translation, I decided to de-emphasize Joyce's one-word phrasing and follow Shakespeare's in the Polish *Othello* by Ulrich. First, it provides a clear echo of "beast with two backs" from earlier chapters and, second, it allows me to render Joyce's word "Married" in the plural. Thus, my solution (for now) reads:

Bestia | o dwóch grzbietach | o północy. | Ślub wzięli.
[beast | with two backs | at midnight. | They wedded]

"Words"

I'd like to finish with Joyce's Hamletian phrase "In words of words for words" (*U* 9.577) to illustrate another challenge that Polish presents to translators. It is not difficult to render this in Romance languages where nouns in plural remain unchanged and are modified by articles: "In parole di parole per parole" (De Angelis, 195; Terrinoni, 391); "En palabras de palabras para palabras" (Salas Subirat-I 1995, 298), "Des mots et des mots pour des mots" (Morel 1929, 226); "Dans les mots des mots pour les mots (Aubert 291), etc. However, the Polish language presents a few dilemmas that prompt translators to choose different paths:

Słomczyński: Słowa | przeciw słowom | dla słów (154)
[words | against words | for words]

[11] In translation by Jan Paszkowski, the phrase is: "Klei z murzynem kazirodny związek" [she bonds with the black man in an incestuous union] (Lwów: 1895, 237; corrected in modern editions to "Klei z Murzynem zwierza o dwu grzbietach" [she bonds with the black man {and they look like} a beast with two backs]) and "Jak myślisz, czy wzięli oni ślub?".

Świerkocki: W słowach, | ze słów, | brak słów (207)[12]
[In words, | from words, | lack of words]

Wawrzycka: Słowami | słów | za słowa
[With words| of words | for words]

Each translation opens with a different form of "words," a dictate of different grammatical cases: nominative in Słomczyński, locative in Świerkocki, and ablative case in my own translation. I took my cue from the context of Stephen's memory of Synge's "harsh gargoyle face that **warred** against [him]…" – **walczyła** przeciw [niemu] – **with** weapons that happened to be "words," in Polish, "słowa**mi**."

I also would like to point out that Słomczyński's "for words" differs semantically from my "for words:" Słomczyński renders Joyce's "for" as "dla," it is missing from Świerkocki's translation, and it appears as "za" in my translation. Słomczyński's "for/dla" is in genitive while in my translation "for/za" is in accusative case. Where in English these two meanings of "for" are contextual, Polish relies on two separate words.

Conclusions

Even as my titular evocation of translation as "taking arms" waxes metaphorical, all examples discussed here expose granularity of translators' incessant travails *in* words and *with* words, frequently to the effect of skewing or eliding semantic fields of source texts and/or forging the new ones. Humbling and instructive as it is to study the results of those labours across cultures and across centuries, the context of intertextuality shines the light not only on previous versions of any foreign text, but also on the value of retranslations that Lawrence Venuti sees as a challenge to the existing versions, a challenge that brings a denser and more "complex intertextuality so as to signify and call attention to the competing interpretations" (Venuti 2004, 32). The intertextuality of "Joyce-in-English" referencing "Shakespeare-in-English" becomes exponentially complex outside of the English language. Joyce's collaboration on *Ulysses* with his French translators – and help he offered to his German translator, Goyert – further deepen this complexity: Joyce's help could be understood as acts of *retranslation* (Wawrzycka 2020, 127) as he grappled with his own meanings refracted through the emerging French and German texts. This essay is designed to, once again, pay homage to translators' impasse-fraught solitary labours of "taking arms" that leave imprints both subtle and indelible on target languages. It seems fitting to close with the words of the editors of *Retranslating Joyce for the 21st Century*, who, commenting on Barbara Cassin's term "untranslatables" defined as "instability of meaning and sense making, the performative dimension of sophistic effect and the condition

[12] Świerkocki's line features commas, though they are absent from Joyce's line. They might have been added by the translator, but they may also have been inserted during the final stages of book production to conform to the rigid norms that govern the rules of Polish punctuation.

of temporality on translation" (2014, vii), add that, "translators throughout the centuries (translators of Joyce included) have grappled with (…) the temporality of translations as a day-to-day, pedestrian reality of what it means to translate […] alongside another of Cassin's insights, *that of the interminability of translation*: that translation can never be over, and permanently calls for translation anew" (Wawrzycka and Mihálycsa 2020, 11; emphasis added).

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